

Maria Kielar-Turska

Maria Einhorn-Susułowska (1915–1998)

Maria Einhorn-Susułowska was born on the 14th of January 1915 into a large Jewish family in Gorlice. Her parents were Józef Einhorn, a craftsman, and Rachel née Tanenbaum. After finishing her neo-classical secondary school, Maria Einhorn moved to Cracow, where she started to study at the Jagiellonian University's Faculty of Philosophy. During her degree she supported herself by giving private lessons and from the grant she received. After finishing her philosophical studies in teaching in 1938 she returned home to Gorlice but was unable to find a full-time post and had to maintain herself through private tutoring. After the outbreak of the World War II she escaped from the advancing German army. She stayed in Lvov where she worked as a labourer and then as a clerk in a factory making fruit preserves. From 1941 to 1944, when the German army started to occupy the USSR, she hid, making use of the Aryan documents of her friend, M. Susułowska. She obtained the documents from her husband, Włodzimierz Reczek, later Minister of Sport, a member of the Olympic committee. During this period she made ends meet by cooking. She was connected with the resistance in the eastern territories; those who she helped in her kitchen would later help her in the difficult post-war period. Her parents were killed during the war along with the rest of her family who stayed in Poland – three sisters and a brother. The other three children went abroad: her sister to Palestine and her brothers to the USA.

In 1945 she returned to Cracow. She felt an attachment to the Jewish nation and would say of herself: 'I am a Polish Jew.' She felt that she was personally never discriminated against and, even during the period of the most intense anti-Semitic acts, she was granted the title of professor.

From the conversations held with her assistants, those who cooperated with her, and her students, a picture develops of a sensitive individual, caring, empathic, open, sociable and with a sense of humour. For example, when someone once noted that despite her age she was not going grey, she replied 'I started going grey but then managed to control the situation.' She represented a high level of personal class and was most tactful. Students referred to her as 'Madame Susu,' which meant that she was a true lady: she was always tastefully well dressed, and wore hats. She stood out against the general greyness of the Poland of the time. This was certainly to do with the fact that she could visit her brother in Florida. She would talk of her trips to America, emphasising that there she felt like in a film: she would walk into huge colourful shops full of aromas and buy what she wanted and her brother would pay. She brought back not only clothes that oozed the West but also western concepts taken from books and magazines, which at the time were not available in Poland.

Those invited to her home would rave about her culinary abilities. She was loved for her company and had a gift for interaction, always willing to help others. Many students were helped by her in both their daily lives and their future education. She bestowed a new dimension on the master-pupil relation: on the one hand she was an authority, the model of a demanding teacher, while on the other, she was a friend willing to help. She treated her assistants and Ph.D. students like her family, for the setting up of a real family was something she could never decide on. Often on Sundays, on the day designated for family relations, she would organise meetings for the employees of her unit.

After a long period of sickness during which she was often visited by friends and pupils alike she died on the 6th of December 1998. She was buried at the Jewish cemetery at Miodowa Street in Cracow.

The whole of M. Einhorn-Susułowska's academic life was connected with the Jagiellonian University. She studied there at the Faculty of Philosophy, obtaining her M.Phil. diploma in teaching in 1938. After the war she worked initially as an assistant and then as a lecturer at the university's Department of Pedagogy. On the basis of the work *Środowiskowe przyczyny trudności wychowawczych* [Environmental causes in educational difficulties], for which her supervisor was Prof. Zygmunt Mysłakowski, she gained a Ph.D. in Pedagogy. According to her supervisor she dealt with the topic matter competently, presenting it in a lively and clear manner. In 1958, according to the regulations in

force for the obtainment of academic degrees and titles, attempts to organise a candidate examination [post doctoral – G.T.] for Dr. M. Susułowska at the Faculty of Philosophy were begun by the then dean, Prof. Roman Ingarden. The supervisor for her candidate work *Reakcje poznawcze dzieci w wieku przedszkolnym na sytuacyjnie nowe bodźce* [The cognitive reactions of pre-school children to situationally new stimuli] was Prof. Stefan Szuman, and the reviewers were Prof. Tadeusz Tomaszewski (UW) and Prof. Włodzimierz Szewczuk (UJ). In the study the author described and interpreted studies into the forms of children's reactions from birth to the age of seven to new stimuli of various structures as well as following the developmental changes over this period. The reviewers appreciated the importance of the study, the ingenuity in the modelling of the test situations as well as the analytical approach adopted towards the materials assembled. The author was able to outline the developmental trajectory with a significant breakthrough around about four years of age, when the quantity of the specific manipulations and verbal reactions in the cognition of new stimuli increases. On the basis of the thesis, and in conjunction with her entire output in the form of articles on child education, Dr. M. Susułowska was granted the degree of Candidate in Psychological Sciences (psychology as a new university subject for study had been created in 1957 on the recommendation of Prof. Stefan Szuman) in 1959. Attention was drawn in the opinions given on the work to how the candidate used her knowledge in the solving of socially important practical problems in up-bringing and education, the presentation in publications of the latest foreign currents designating the boundary in the field of up-bringing, the examination of questions of child psychopathology, the drawing of attention to matters of adult education (against the background of an analysis into the activities of the universal university in Nowa Huta, a new workers' town). In 1960 Dr M. Susułowska was awarded the salaried position of assistant professor by the Minister of Higher Education.

Research, organisational and teaching work constituted the basis for subsequent academic titles: associate professor (1969) and full professor (1979). In 1985 she retired, keeping in close contact with the university for a number of years: running seminars on clinical psychology (she was considered to be the best specialist in this field in Poland) as well as supervising Ph.D. students.

Professor M. Einhorn-Susułowska's academic work displays important research trends with the richest being the clinical. Well-read in the foreign subject literature (she was a UN grant holder to Great Britain in 1948 as well as from the Ford Foundation in 1958, she often attended foreign academic conferences, as well as her private trips to visit her brother in Florida) she developed clinical psychology at the Jagiellonian University. She undertook innovative subjects in this area going beyond the parameters of psychic dis-

turbances and incorporating problem areas affecting patients somatically, oncologically and cardiologically, as well as addressing problems in psychological diagnosis, the psychological aspects for old people of functioning in a modern society. In each subject she broached the most important problem. And so in realising the government research programme *Psychologiczne aspekty chorób nowotworowych* [Psychological aspects of cancerous illnesses], in tests on the psychological aspects of cancer she proved what an important matter interaction is on society's awareness, illustrating that cancer is not synonymous with death. In turn, in research into the life balance of old people, raising their life quality was the matter in hand. She emphasised that this is not simply the adding of years to someone's life expectancy but also the improvement in the quality of life for these years. She considered the creation of the possibility to make old people active an important social problem, with one of the ways being the University of the Third Age, which was founded by her in 1982 and which is still functioning to this day. The concept is realised by various academic and social centres throughout Poland. As a clinical psychologist she drew attention to the fact that problems have to be not simply diagnosed but that help is also needed in resolving them.

She undertook deficiency problems in Polish psychology, and namely those from the border area of the psychology of up-bringing and the clinical psychology of children and young people. These areas included: emotional disturbances, aggressive behaviour, criminality, suicides, educational difficulties. She pointed to the necessity to conduct dialogue with the parents of children causing educational problems; she emphasised that forging contact with parents and talking to them constituted the basis for any influence to be exerted on the child.

As a result of her teaching degree she was highly interested in the problems of upbringing/education and teaching. Of note is her empirical research into success at degree level as dependent on the type of degree and the qualities of individual students. This was to be the first study of higher education in Poland.

She also involved herself in matters from the field of general psychology, such as perception and memory. From this group of works the research into children's spatial perception is of note, carried out on the instruction of UNESCO within the framework of the international project coordinated by Kevin Lynch (Perception of Environment by Children, aged 14–15 years).

A separate area of M. Einhorn-Susulowska's research was the distant/psychic remote consequences of being politically or racially persecuted. She concentrated on research into concentration camp prisoners with her analysis of the content of concentration camp prisoners' dreams being unique in character. In 1966, she started research into the subject area of the situation and

the experiences of Jews who had hidden during the war on Aryan papers and documents and which led to their death. She presented the results of this research at international conferences (Helsinki, 1983; Oświęcim, 1989), giving a penetrating image of the psychological disturbances of those tested, a consequence of the chronic stress they had experienced.

One may say that as an academic she was as sensitive to the actual problems within the field of her interests as she was prepared to conduct tests reflecting the actual needs of practice. The results of her research and reflections she presented in publications, in papers given at international and national conferences as well as during her lectures. Reviewers of her works emphasised the innovative nature and inspiring content they represented not only for psychology but also for related subjects such as: educational psychology, psychiatry, special needs teaching. Note was also made of her ability to convey even the most difficult of problems from the field of clinical psychology in a straightforward way.

She employed interviews and discussions/conversations in her research. She was a master at conducting a psychological discussion and in the application of qualitative methods in psychology. Her works were first and foremost *case studies*; they were insightful clinical analyses of individual cases. She shunned statistical studies. In her view, they brought with them nothing of worth and would repeat in discussions on the subject of statistics – *garbage in and garbage out* – drawing attention to the fact that we only get what we entered at the beginning, meaning that if the data is flawed then the image we receive is a distorted one.

She always connected her academic research to practical needs. Having organised an extremely popular symposium in Modlnica she contributed to a broad discussion on the theoretical and practical problems of diagnosis. The symposium also hosted foreign speakers including the well-known Russian neuropsychologists: Aleksander Luria and Bluma V. Zeigarnik. The materials that resulted from symposia were extremely helpful in educating students and improving the practices of psychologists. While head of the Department of Clinical Psychology (1961 to 1985) she worked at the same time at the Medical Academy's Psychiatric Clinic in Cracow as well as heading the Educational-Therapeutic Clinic at the Jagiellonian University (1945–1972). She conducted psychological training sessions for doctors and medical students. She cooperated with doctors of various specialisations, making doctors aware of the necessity for psychology in treatment programmes as well as showing that psychology was itself a separate discipline. In turn, she took psychology students for practical classes to medical units to enable them to acquire the necessary knowledge and practical abilities and skills. She showed how to deal with someone ill or injured by life and how important an analy-

sis of the situational context in which they find themselves is to understand a given patient. Her proposed model was for the work of a clinical psychologist to supplement the work of doctors themselves through their abilities. She accentuated the need for a humanisation of medicine, she was a precursor of the biopsychosocial model for the functioning of this discipline.

She held many positions and fulfilled many functions: she was deputy dean of the Jagiellonian University's Philosophical-Psychological Faculty (1961–1965), a delegate to the Jagiellonian University's Senate, the editor of a pedagogical-psychological series of academic journals for the university, a member of many Polish and foreign academic societies (including the *Polskie Towarzystwo Psychologiczne* and the Association of Applied Psychology). She never belonged to any political organisations. For her academic and organisational work she received many prizes and awards including the Knight's Cross of the Order of *Polonia Restituta*, the Gold Cross of Merit, and the Medal of the Polish National Education Commission.

Bibliography

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